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ABSTRACT

"Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." tells of King's childhood determination to use "big words" through biographical information and quotations. In this lesson, students in grades 3 to 5 explore information on Dr. King to think about his "big" words, then they write about their own "big" words and dreams. During the one 50-minute session, students will: read (or listen to stories) about Dr. King's life and think about their own impact on the future; identify the different meanings of the word "big" as it relates to the idea of "big words"; analyze sample quotations for "big" words; and think reflectively about personal dreams and ideas; and create a list of their own "big words" either originally or as a found poem. The instructional plan, lists of resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. An excerpt from Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech; famous quotations from Dr. King's works; found poems from the "I Have a Dream" speech; a "My Big Words" book template; and a found poem word mover are attached. (RS)

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How Big Are *Martin's Big Words?* Thinking Big about the Future

ED 480 631

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Grade Band

3-5

Estimated Lesson Time

One 50-minute session

Overview

Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a Caldecott Honor book, Coretta Scott King Honor book, and an Orbis Pictus Award winner, tells of King's childhood determination to use "big words" through biographical information and quotations. Using this book as well as other resources on Dr. King, students explore information on King's "big" words then choose one of two options: (1) they write about their own "big" words and dreams in stapled or stitched books, or (2) they construct found poems using an excerpt from one of King's speeches.

From Theory to Practice

To talk about Dr. King's life is to talk about terrible things: racism, bombings, murders, assassination. Yet it is also to discuss wonderful things: love, peace, harmony, pride, determination. What do we tell children about the "bad" things in the world? How can we "give [them] hope... provide [them] with reasons to embrace life and its possibilities" (Stanley 41)?

Ultimately, Stanley resolves, "Education is the only solution that I know to these dilemmas. Education, understood not as technique or training, not as schooling, but as part and parcel of 'the engagement of being human,' i.e., the shared act of making meaning of meanings inherited from others" (41).

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the NCTE Executive Committee issued a statement that concluded similarly: "We assert that the long-term response to violence and cruelty—indeed the only truly effective response—is education, an education in which social justice and the dignity of all people are held paramount."

In this activity, students focus on this kind of educational goal. Through an exploration of Dr. King's use of nonviolent protest and the power of words as a weapon for social justice, students learn more about Dr. King's life and think about their own impact on the future. And by turning from King's words to their own hopes for the future, the activity specifically highlights hope for the future.

Further Reading

Stanley, Timothy J. 1999. "A Letter to My Children: Historical Memory and the Silences of Childhood." *Teaching for a Tolerant World, Grades K-6: Essays and Resources.* Ed. Judith P. Robertson. Urbana: NCTE. Pp. 34-44.
Stanley's article focuses on talking to his children about whether Nazis are "bad guys." While not directly about King or African American history, the piece is a relevant discussion of the things that we do and do not talk to children and students about, when we discuss them, how we discuss them, and why we discuss them.

Moss, Joy F. 2002. *Literary Discussion in the Elementary School.* Urbana: NCTE.
Moss's book, and her related Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges: Critical Discussion of Social Issues

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lesson plan address similar themes.

Student Objectives

Students will .

- read (or listen to stories) about Dr. King's life and think about their own impact on the future.
- identify the different meanings of the word "big" as it relates to the idea of "big words."
- analyze sample quotations for "big" words.
- think reflectively about personal dreams and ideas and create a list of their own "big words" either originally or as a found poem.

Resources

- Excerpt from "I Have a Dream" Speech
- Famous Quotations by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Found Poems Examples
- The Seattle Times Web Site
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service Web Site
- Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site Web Site
- "My Big Words" Book Template
- "I Have a Dream" Found Poem Word Mover
- The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project Web Site
- Five-Stitch Bookbinding Web Site

Instructional Plan

Resources

- Books and other resources on Dr. King. A booklist is included in the Web Resources below. If available, be sure to include Doreen Rappaport's *Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Illustrated by Bryan Collier. Hyperion Books for Children. 2001).
- Internet access to King's "I Have a Dream" speech, or printed copies of the speech.
- Internet access to handouts or printed copies for each student.
- "I Have a Dream" Found Poem Word Mover

Preparation

- Collect resources on Dr. King that are appropriate for your students.
- Practice reading *Martin's Big Words* aloud, if you are using the book. Dr. King's words have a particular rhythm, and you'll read the book better if you've had a chance to familiarize yourself with it.
- Arrange for computer access or copies of the handouts.

Instruction and Activities

1. Either as a whole class activity or in small groups, read books or online resources on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life chosen from the resource lists. If available, conclude your exploration by reading *Martin's Big Words* to the whole class.
2. Talk about the difference between a word's literal meanings (its denotations) and figurative meanings (its connotations). In *Martin's Big Words,* the book's author, Doreen Rappaport, quotes King's resolve as a child: "When I grow up, I'm going to get big words, too." Either after reading Rappaport's book or exploring Dr. King's speeches online, talk about the defintion of "big." Dr. King's "big" words are not always so large in length as they are in importance: Freedom, Peace,

Love, and so on.

3. Distribute copies of the "I Have a Dream" speech or show the speech on a computer screen or overhead projector. Read the second paragraph of the speech (the "fivescore years ago" passage) aloud, asking students to follow along on their copy.
4. Ask students to read the paragraph to themselves, noting the "big" words in the passage. Tell students that they will share their lists with the class.
5. Read the paragraph aloud again to help students think about the sound of the words before sharing from their lists.
6. Ask students to share the "big" words they found in the speech. Write the words on the board or overhead. Discuss with students why they have chosen the words that they have and why they consider the words "big."

   More Practice
   If your students need more practice identifying "big" words, divide them into groups and ask each group to focus on a different paragraph in the "I Have a Dream" speech (or another speech). Circulate among groups and monitor student progress. Provide individual help as necessary. After students have had time to complete their lists, have each group share their list of words. Note in particular words that show up on more than one group's list.

7. When you are confident that students understand the concept behind "big" words, ask students to create their own list of big words—either creating found poems using Word Mover to choose words from an excerpt of Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech, or working independently to build a book about their own "big" words. When students have finished created either the found poems or their books, give them the chance to share their work with the rest of the class.

   - *Found Poems*
     1. Share the example found poems and original excerpt from which it was drawn with the class.
     2. Have students choose a passage in the speech in which the language and images particularly strike them, or use the excerpt from the "I Have a Dream" speech.
     3. Instruct students to convert the prose passage into a poem by deleting words and playing with line breaks. Students can use the "I Have a Dream" Found Poem Word Mover to arrange words into a variety of different poems, or they can write their different versions out on paper.

     For more information, see the Found Poems/Parallel Poems lesson plan.

   - *Independent Lists*
     1. Have students begin by brainstorming a list of words that are meaningful to them, a list of their own "big" words. If students need additional help, you might share a list of Dr. King's quotations that they can use for inspiration.
     2. Once students have a list of words, have them choose the five words on the list with the "biggest" meaning for them. Each student's list will be different—and each will be right. This is a personal list.
     3. Once students have narrowed down the list, they need to think about their reasons for choosing each word. Provide the following example:

        One of Dr. King's "big" words is love, which he has used in the quotation, "Hate cannot drive out hate. Only **love** can do that" [emphasis added].

     4. For each of their five words, ask students to think of or compose a short sentence that demonstrates why the word is important to them.
     5. Explain the template for the "My Big Words" book. Students type their

name on the first page. On the following five pages, they type their big word and the related sentence or quotation. On the final page, students can create their own conclusion to the book—they might list all the words as on the final page of *Martin's Big Words,* for instance.

6. Once students understand the template, they either type the information on the pages if working online or write on printed copies. If working online, have students print out their work once they've typed in their text.
7. When the text is finished, students cut out the individual pages.
8. Once all the pages are finished, staple the pages together, or stitch the pages together with needle and thread (see the Web Resources for details on stitching a book together).
9. Once the books are assembled, students can draw illustrations on the backs of each page. Explain that illustrations will pair with the quotation on the facing page. You can use pages from *Martin's Big Words* to demonstrate illustrations facing pages of text. The last page of *Martin's Big Words* provides an example of this layout (with the picture on the left side and the words on the right side.

Web Resources

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site
http://www.nps.gov/malu/

Martin Luther King Jr National Historic Site: King's birth home, 501 Auburn Avenue, in Atlanta, Georgia is a National Historic Site. This Web site explores the resources at the home as well as King's life and other historic locations in the Atlanta area.

The Seattle Times
http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/mlk/

The Seattle Times: Martin Luther King, Jr. For more information on King's life, see the Seattle Times Web site's compilation of both King's life and a Civil Rights timeline. If the Rappaport/Collier book is not available at your library, you could use speeches and resources available at this site with your class.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project
http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/popular_requests/

Popular Requests at The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project at Stanford University. This site includes the text of King's well-known writings including the "Letter from Birmingham Jail," the "I Have a Dream" speech, and King's final speech, "I've Been to the Mountaintop."

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service Web Site
http://www.mlkday.org/reading_list.html

Resources from the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service Web site. Choose among the books and resources at this site, including other useful Web sites, to collect additional information for your students to explore in class.

Five-Stitch Bookbinding
http://www.zumgaligali.com/projects/bookbinding/book_5st_1.html

Five-Stitch Bookbinding: This site explains how to use needle and thread to stitch a small book together. While the dimensions for the "My Big Words" books that your students may make will differ, these general instructions tell you everything that you need to know to stitch a simple book together.

Student Reproducibles and Other Resources

1. Excerpt from "I Have a Dream" Speech
2. Famous Quotations by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
3. Found Poems Examples
4. "My Big Words" Book Template

Student Assessment/Reflections

The "big" words that students choose can't be assessed easily. A word that seems "big" to one person may seem quite unimportant to another. The best way to assess students' work on this project is first to see that they've finished the task, and second to base feedback on students' reflection on the project:

1. Ask them to write a reflective paragraph that talks about their choices. Ask them to explain how they chose the words that they did for the found poems, or why they chose the five words that they did for the books.
2. Ask students to submit their finished work and any notes they've taken. From this material you'll be able to see how the students chose their "big" words.
3. As you review their work, focus your feedback on the connections between the words that they chose and the reasons that they chose them. Students whose reflections show close connections between their choices and their explanations have demonstrated an understanding of the underlying concepts of the lesson. Students who can't explain their choices may not yet understand the concept of "big" words.

NCTE/IRA Standards

1 - Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12 - Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

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Excerpt from Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" Speech

I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have am dream today.

Famous Quotations from the Works of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

...And I've looked over, and I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land. So I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man.

All progress is precarious, and the solution of one problem brings us face to face with another problem.

Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.

Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. you only need a heart full of grace. a soul generated by love.

Hatred paralyzes life; love releases it. Hatred confuses life; love harmonizes it. Hatred darkens life; love illumines it.

Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.

I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. That is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.

I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law.

I submit to you that if a man hasn't discovered something he will die for, he isn't fit to live.

In the End, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Knowledge is a process of piling up facts; wisdom lies in their simplification.

Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. the foundation of such a method is love.

Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.

Now, I say to you today my friends, even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American

dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: - 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'

Our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men.

Segregation is the adultery of an illicit intercourse between injustice and immorality.

Ten thousand fools proclaim themselves into obscurity, while one wise man forgets himself into immortality.

The church must be the critic and guide of the state, and never its tool.

The good neighbor looks beyond the external accidents and discerns those inner qualities that make all men human and, therefore, brothers.

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.

When you are right, you cannot be too radical; When you are wrong, you cannot be too conservative.

Found Poems from "I Have a Dream" Speech

Example One:

Today...tomorrow
a dream
content:
deeply rooted
freedom

Example Two:

Friends I have
together
brotherhood
will rise up
true
transformed by freedom

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Follow the instructions in the left and right margins to click and type the information in the book.

Help

My Big Words

by

type your name here

type your first big word here

type your details for the first word here

1

type your second big word

type your third big word

type your details for the second word here

type your details for the third word here

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3

5

11

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type your fourth big word

type your details for the fourth word here

type your ending here

7

9

type your fifth big word

type your details for the fifth word here

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11

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"I Have a Dream" Found Poem Word Mover

Print | Add a Word

I say to you today my friends so even though we face
the difficulties of today and tomorrow I still have a dream
I still have a dream It is a dream deeply rooted the American dream

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi a state sweltering with the heat of oppression will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice

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